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Geisler & Andrews

A GARDEN-PARTY FROCK IN WHITE ORGANDIE  
BY HICKSON

## The American Woman and Dress

BY JANET DUER

THE transition of war-time fashions to the present mode in woman's dress has been as interesting to note as the metamorphosis of the brilliantly winged butterfly. For four long serious years the woman was content to be the war-worker and to subject her beauty not only to the relentless outlines of regulation uniforms and oftentimes trying head dress, but to the test of going without the dainty and becoming clothes to which she was accustomed. She proved a good soldier, however, fought her fight bravely against all selfish and inherent temptations. True it is that her inborn coquetry asserted itself in the very adjustment of her Red Cross veil and in the manner that she wore her simple uniform of blue or canteen working apron, but who would criticize her for this indulgence or deny her the right? Was it not this very tendency that largely contributed toward the *esprit de corps* of all women's war activities and made them the success they were? What weary hungry soldier would not be cheered by such a presence, —another evidence of what a woman often accomplishes through her weaknesses rather than through her strength.

At the time of the signing of the Armistice the American woman was personally so unprepared in the matter of any distinct innovation in dress that she could only seem, at first, to express her emotion in color, and then only in such things as could be obtained through the stress of war conditions which naturally limited materials and consequently design. Thus the varying shades of red appeared, in hats and evening gowns and wonderful voluminous evening wraps that were worn at suitable times and places where they could best express woman's triumph and enthusiasm.

But months have passed and the seasons have changed, giving the design-

ers of women's clothes, both in America and in Paris, ample opportunity to create new outlines and force a contradiction of many well established features. They have chopped off sleeves and have decreed that skirt lengths shall be correspondingly short. The backs of evening gowns have been entirely eliminated and curves have been completely effaced in one of the fashionable silhouettes. In this the waist line no longer exists as a definite dividing line between bodice and skirt, but depends entirely upon personal preference as to where it shall appear, if at all. This is determined by the girdle, which can be but a narrow band that goes about the figure twice and ties or broadens out into the lovely soft crushed girdle of satin, silk or tulle that ends in a coquettish bow at the side or back.

Then there is the alternative in the full skirt gathered evenly at the waist and turned under just below the knees, Turkish trouser-like, and fastens upon a tight long drop skirt. With this there is a plain rather tight little bodice.

But whatever other concessions, the American woman insists that foot-wear (in which she excels in smartness) shall not disappear under skirts that are either too voluminous or too long. The sympathetic designers of the new lines of dress have accordingly not overlooked this, for the daintily slippered foot is allowed ample opportunity to peep out, be it in the gown for the street or the house, although, on the other hand, the American woman has been loath to accept the recent edict from Paris in the four-inches-below-the-knee length skirt. She is the exponent of moderation and is very much inclined to follow all such extremes at a respectful distance.

Whether the American woman actually approves or not, fashion both here and abroad has decided that she shall



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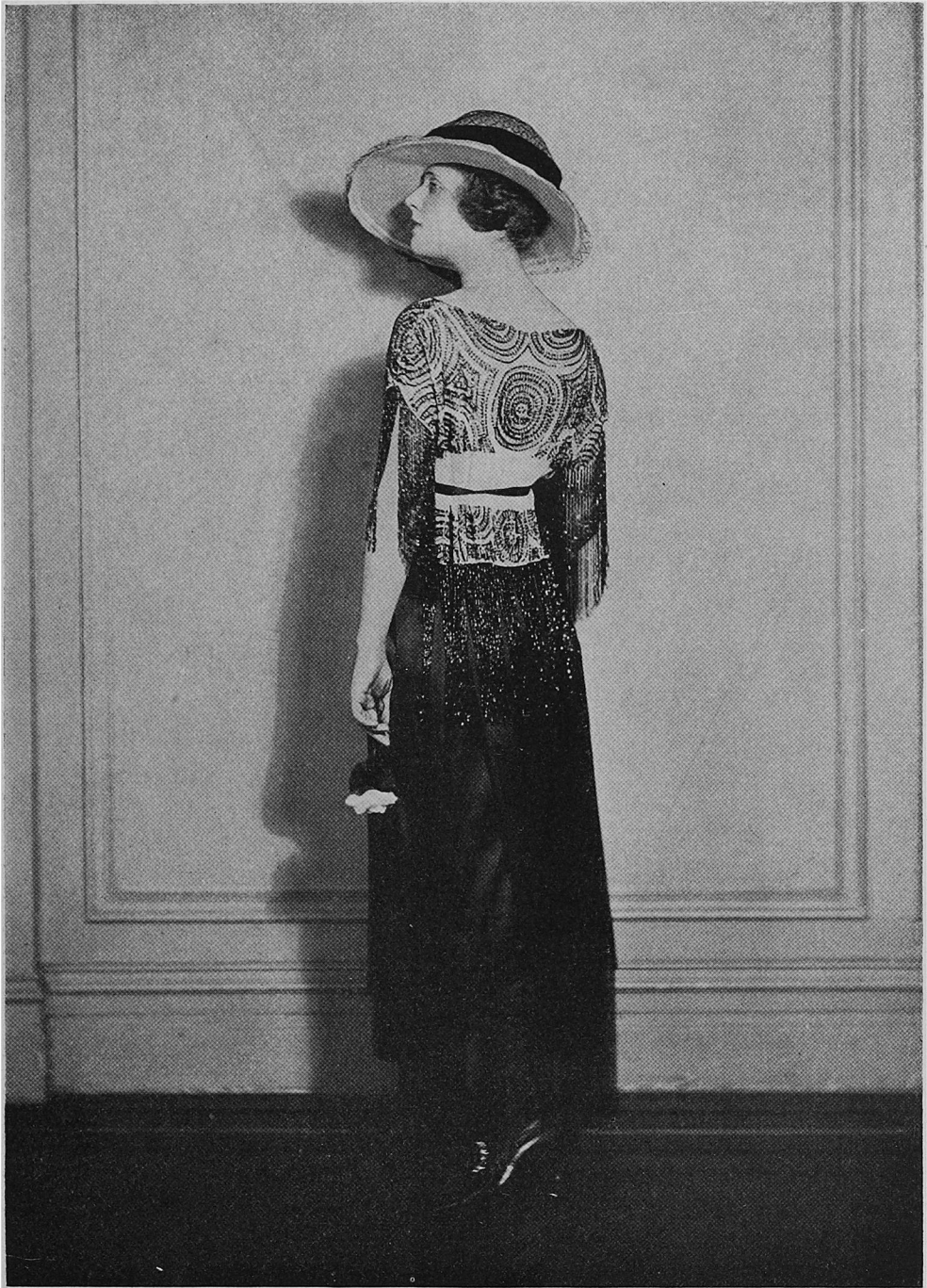
A TAILOR DRESS IN NAVY "TRICOT"



Geisler & Andrews

A SUMMER DINNER GOWN IN LAVENDER SHOT TAFFETA





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A DINNER GOWN IN BLACK METEOR WITH WHITE GEORGETTE CORSAGE

plume herself, not figuratively but literally. The long neglected ostrich feather which for years has drooped and been laid aside in disuse has again come into its own and bedecks my lady's gowns as well as hats and even appears as a popular trimming for her parasols.

In color the American woman's preference has become modified, and her choice for street use is for the more conventional colorings that usually are seen at this season, such as dark blue, sand color and a pleasing shade of brown. For evening use the hydrangea blues appear, and the most exquisite blendings of color that master-hands can weave together are made to tempt her back into the paths of fashion and away from the sombreness of war-time, for woman is the entertainer of the world, now more than ever. It is she who must distract the thoughts of war-weary men from the memories of the battlefield. She must charm, she must delight with her grace and beauty and to this end her clothes have been designed that she may be even lovelier than ever, for there is much truth in the old adage concerning the magic powers of fine feathers.

Having exhausted the ordinary materials and usages in clothes that are properly supposed to appear at this season of the year, all tradition seems to have been brushed aside and exact appropriateness, perhaps, sacrificed to exacting becomingness; no matter how great may be the incongruities, as, for instance, the wearing of fur in the summer time.

No matter how warm the day, a small one-skin sable neck piece, worn tightly around the throat is to be the season's novelty. This is seen with sweaters and gowns alike, and although one may cry, "How absurd!" it is at least a modification of the ample skins of long-haired fox that have been worn in previous summers. Again, on the many chiffon evening capes that have been designed for summer use, taking the place of the brilliant velvets and metal brocades worn throughout the winter, fur is the accepted trimming.

And why? Simply because woman has found it to be the most becoming and the most fascinating. No law of propriety can prevail against this! She even indulges in capes of moleskin or baby lamb for summer use, her desire for fur being only limited by her endurance. Mere man, perhaps, will be basking his superior rationalism in high collars and fulsome cravats!

Insisting on fur, woman further flaunts her defiance to consistency by wearing the most transparent of gowns, one-toned chiffons or figured Georgettes, which, except in the matter of color, have the semblance of evening gowns (minus the train), for while she may hesitate to accept the abbreviated sleeve, she does not oppose décolleté in street clothes. Whether the short sleeve will eventually be accepted, as the summer approaches, is a question yet to be decided.

The New York woman in spite of what might be called her dress eccentricities, has prejudices that she never seeks to overcome. One of these has been against wearing light-colored washable fabrics on the street during the summer. This prejudice seems based on an old, well-established unwritten law of the realm of dress, just as the wearing of straw hats by men is limited by certain calendar dates, quite regardless of caprices of thermometers.

The habit of years has enforced this curious fashion, and while the heat in New York, Boston and other American cities is often prolonged and of tropical intensity, the average well-gowned woman prefers a dark color for street use to a dainty cool-looking gown of washable material.

For country wear, however, she revels to her heart's content in fresh colorful linens, organdies and gingham, and this season she will wear much lace. Her sport clothes, which constitute a vital part of her summer wardrobe, are perfect examples of tailored simplicity yet riotous in brilliant colors. But when she comes to town she promptly selects a gown of sombre coloring. Perhaps, after all, this



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AN AFTERNOON GOWN IN ELEPHANT GREY TULLE  
BY JENNY



has the excuse of utility and practicability, for the dust and dirt of the city soon show their mark on light-colored fabrics.

In the matter of hats there, again, certain peculiarities assert themselves in the trimmings, though possibly less this year than in previous summers. Flowers, which are naturally associated with straw as its logical trimming, have been supplanted by all kinds of *fantaisies* made from feathers, this season by the ostrich plume itself and the tail feathers of the Bird of Paradise. But flowers do appear on hats for country use, and are even associated with their rivals, in the same trimming, on hats for town wear.

Possibly the popularity of feathers can be explained by the graceful outline they give to the large, drooping broad-brimmed hat that is so much worn. A woman's eyes take on a wistful expression beneath a hat of this type that cannot be obtained from the close fitting turban. A large hat also gives a certain balance to her slender figure, with its graceful draperies, a fact of which Gainsborough and other portrait painters made much in their time.

These hats are oftentimes of velvet and straw, or of tulle, but are always worn well over the forehead so that the eyes peer out just below the edge of the brim. This gives the necessary touch of coquetry that goes to make the complement of woman's dress what it is today.

Every line is thought out with a view to its effect upon woman's entire figure. In the selection of hats, not only is its color an important factor, but the general outline is carefully studied that it may express all the gown implies.

In fact so important a part does the matter of head covering play this season, that Paris has adopted the fashion of headdresses for evening wear in the most elaborate combinations of brilliant jeweled bandeaus with graceful drooping feathers that curve and play about the face of the wearer.

This, indeed, is an innovation, for except for a jeweled comb or diamond (bandeau), woman has, heretofore, been

content to show her hair unadorned, or at least, it has been so these many years past.

While the American woman is quick to grasp a suggestion in the matter of dress, this does not necessarily imply that she will accept it. She is, in fact, a very willful person, so much so that in spite of the mandates of the great couturières of Paris, she selects what she considers best suited to her particular needs, and in making her purchases over here often insists upon certain modifications.

It is this discrimination and dominating individuality however, that has made America the most critical market in the world for clothes of good taste. While she may be fastidious, the American woman does not stint in praise or in the matter of expenditure as long as she is impressed with the feeling that her gowns are reflecting her personality and that she is expressing the true meaning of her gown.

She is a faithful student, with an intelligent understanding of the appreciation of the fundamental principles of art in dress, in the question of line and in the application of color. In all this, however, it must not be thought that the American woman is merely imitative. While she is interested in other things as well as her clothes she is just as interested in her clothes as in other things, and she does wish, if she adopts a thing to adapt it to her particular requirements. The well-dressed American woman is interested in more than the mere process of getting into her clothes; she is intensely interested in other than their utilitarian purpose. She wishes, indeed, to know that they will look well and continue to look well.

If she does not possess the figure necessary for the prevailing mode, she promptly goes about acquiring it until she becomes what the fashion demands. She is all that she strives to be, irrepressibly delightful, delightfully irrepressible, adaptable and irresistible.